

# SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project



Washington State  
Department of Transportation

Fact Sheet

Fall 2005

## Tolling on SR 520

### **Will tolls be used as a way to fund the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project?**

Tolling will be part of any funding package for the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project. The project team anticipates that toll revenues will support approximately \$700 million in funding for the project, though the actual amount will depend on the adopted toll policy and financial market conditions at the time bonds are sold. The remaining funding will come from both regional and state sources.

### **How much would the tolls cost?**

The toll cost would vary by the time of day, day of the week, and/or direction of travel according to a set schedule. Tolls would be charged each way, and would be higher during peak periods than during off-peak periods. The toll rates and policies have not yet been established, however the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) evaluates possible tolls of up to \$3.50 each way in today's dollars.

### **How will tolls be collected?**

Tolls will be collected using electronic technology that does not require toll booths, cash payments, or travel delays. Overhead card readers in the roadway would detect a credit card-sized transponder in each vehicle and automatically deduct the toll payment from the user's account. User accounts could be linked to a credit or debit card, or they could be prepaid.

### **How will tolls be collected from vehicles that don't have the transponder card?**

The overhead card reader detects vehicles that do not have transponders. This would trigger the license plate camera to take a picture, allowing for several secondary payment options. One possible approach is for users to register their vehicle's license plate and provide a credit or debit card payment either in advance of, or within 24 hours of traveling on the toll bridge. This could be done via a Web site, telephone, WSDOT's 511 driver information phone line, or even kiosks at convenience stores. Another option is to identify the vehicle's owner from the license



### **Electronic Toll Collection**

A number of states use electronic toll collection systems and they have worked with great success. As the vehicle passes through the toll lane, the electronic reader located above reads the transponder located on the vehicle's windshield. Once the electronic reader reads the transponder, it automatically deducts the toll amount from the driver's pre-paid account.

If the vehicle does not have a transponder, the electronic reader detects that there is no transponder, which triggers a camera that records the vehicle license number. As described to the left, there are several ways to bill drivers who do not purchase a transponder.

plate and mail the owner a bill for the toll along with an administrative processing fee. A third possibility, designed to address infrequent or out-of-town users, is to allow every vehicle one or two free passes per year, before either billing or sending a violation notice to the owner of a vehicle without a transponder. Specific policies on secondary payment methods have not been established at this date.

**Will I need to slow down to pay the toll?**

No. The overhead card readers can detect vehicle transponders at normal highway speeds. The toll collection system would not create a bottleneck or choke point on SR 520.

**Who will pay the tolls?**

Specific toll policies have not yet been established, however the project team has made the following assumptions:

- Vehicles with one or two occupants, or otherwise traveling in the general-purpose lanes, would be tolled. Transit and carpools (three or more people) traveling in the HOV lane would likely be exempt from tolls.
- Those using the bicycle/pedestrian lane would not be tolled.

**How will I obtain a transponder card, and how much will it cost?**

No definitive decisions have been made yet but most other states with similar electronic tolling systems charge a small, one-time fee for the transponder card.

**Will charging tolls push drivers to use different routes, such as I-90 or SR 522, thereby creating more congestion there?**

There is a possibility of route diversion, meaning that some drivers choose different routes than they would normally take due to the cost associated with tolls. This type of diversion to alternative routes is anticipated to be very low because of the limited choice of alternate routes and the inherent congestion already present on those alternate routes at the peak times when tolls are higher. Rather than choose an alternate route, many travelers would instead be more likely to use a different mode of travel, such as carpool, bicycle or transit, or to travel at off-peak times.

**To view the SR 520 Toll Feasibility Study online:**

Go to <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/Library.htm>.

A link to the study is included with the materials from the April 13, 2004 Executive Committee meeting materials.

**For More Information:****Project Web site:**

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge)

**Phone:** (206) 781-3922

**E-mail:** [SR520Bridge@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:SR520Bridge@wsdot.wa.gov)

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**ADA Information:**

Individuals requiring reasonable accommodation of any type may contact Paul Krueger, Environmental Manager, WSDOT at (206) 381-6432. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may call WA State Telecommunications Relay Service (TTY) at 711.

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